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C O N F I D E N T I A L DJIBOUTI 000835

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 06/17/2014

TAGS: [PHUM](#) [PGOV](#) [SCUL](#) [DJ](#)

SUBJECT: REPORT ON RECENT ARREST OF JOURNALIST

REF: DJIBOUTI 822

Classified By: Pol/Econ Erinn C. Reed for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

11. (C) On 8 June, Houssein Ahmed Farah, journalist for the opposition newspaper Le Renouveau and brother to famed opposition leader Daher Ahmed Farah - jailed several times in 2003 for political reasons, was arrested after he failed to stop for the First Lady of Djibouti's convoy traveling towards the Presidency. Farah was on his return from covering the protests in the Arhiba neighborhood (reftel) when he encountered the First Lady's convoy. Farah, in court appearances, indicated that he did not see the convoy coming and was distracted by passengers, which caused him to continue into the intersection and the path of the convoy. Farah then reportedly immediately reversed and removed himself from the path of the convoy as ordered. The arrest was said to have been ordered by the First Lady, Kadra Mahamoud, after she arrived at the Presidency. Farah was charged with "endangering the First Lady's convoy" and was detained at the Police Station until his arraignment on 12 June. The judge in the case gave Farah "detention provisoire" (temporary detention pending a trial) and sent him to Gabode prison. Farah's case was given expedited treatment and his trial took place 17 June. Farah was found not guilty and released.

12. (C) Comment: Farah's arrest was reported in allAfrica.com's June 15th publication, which called it "arbitrary" and claimed he was held in solitary confinement in very poor conditions. Post cannot confirm this portion of the report. The opposition papers in Djibouti also reported the arrest as arbitrary and repression of freedom of the press. Pol/Econ discussed the trial and arrest with Jean Paul Noel, President of the Djiboutian League of Human Rights. Noel admitted that it was strange that Farah was held in "detention provisoire," as it is not usual for a charge of this nature. However, Noel said he would not be writing this up as an arbitrary arrest, because it is not entirely clear that it was arbitrary. Post believes that Farah's arrest may have been slightly politically motivated because of the relation to Daher Ahmed Farah, but does not believe it is related to his status a reporter who covered the Arhiba demonstrations. End Comment.
RAGSDALE